

Patricia García y Teresa López-Pellisa (eds.), *Fantastic Short Stories by Women Authors from Spain and Latin America: A Critical Anthology*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2019. ISBN: 978-1786835086

Women have always written speculative fiction. We owe the existence of the genre to women authors such as Mary Shelley. And yet, while we have seen many advances in scholarship of the Fantastic in recent decades, Patricia García and Teresa López-Pellisa rightly indicate that women authors of Fantastic works remain understudied, particularly in the Spanish-speaking world. García and López-Pellisa's critical anthology, *Women's Fantastic Short Stories by Women Authors from Spain and Latin America*, is a vital step towards remedying this lack of attention to women's Fantastic work.

This critical anthology lays a foundation for future scholarship and provides a concise and readable overview of Fantastic Studies in general. García and López-Pellisa situate their work within the discourse of Fantastic Studies. They do not attempt to create an all-encompassing work, an impossible task, but rather they indicate the need for more attention to Spanish and Latin American women's Fantastic fiction. The text paves the way for necessary future scholarship by outlining a feminist perspective on the Fantastic, much needed in an area in which, like many canonical genres, the most studied authors are men. This is not to say that the introduction leaves

men out of her history of the Fantastic: it merely remedies the previous lack of attention to women authors.

García and López-Pellisa contextualize their work and the included short narratives within the discourse of Fantastic Studies with a thorough introduction that could serve as a foundational reading for anyone interested in the field. García's clear introductory chapter thoroughly reviews Fantastic Studies history from Freud and Todorov to contemporary scholars such as Irène Bessière (1974), Rosemary Jackson (1981), Mary Erdal Jordan (1998) and David Roas (2011/2018). They illustrate the difference between the todorovian Fantastic and Marvelous with well-chosen passages of natural and supernatural narratives.

The anthologists' choice of stories, never an easy decision, is also excellent, and they have selected Emilia Pardo Bazán's «La resucitada» (1912), Amparo Dávila's «El huésped» (1959), Rosario Ferré's «La muñeca menor» (1976), Cristina Fernández Cubas's «El ángulo del horror» (1990), and Ana María Shua's «Vida de perros» (2000). The stories are presented in chronological order. Each of them comes with an introduction that includes biographical information about the author, co-

gent critical analysis of the text itself, and notes on common Fantastic themes and tropes. Within the short stories, printed in the original Spanish, a reader will find helpful footnotes and may refer to a glossary of terms, meaning there will be far less need to refer to an external dictionary if one is unfamiliar with the vocabulary.

This makes the text more accessible to scholars of all experience levels. I would certainly assign this text in an introductory class on the Fantastic. The introduction is concise, well-structured, and clear enough that I would feel comfortable assigning it in an undergraduate course, in graduate seminars, or in a cross-listed course. The footnotes in the stories themselves provide useful translations of phrases and sentences, in addition to the glossary of selected vocabulary, to help the reader comprehend the text. This aspect makes me feel even more comfortable assigning it in an undergraduate class, and I find the notes helpful and relevant to my own reading as well.

The anthology includes thirteen discussion questions («Temas de debate y discusión») such as «¿Cómo interpretas el desenlace de 'La resucitada'? ¿El hecho de que Dorotea vuelva voluntariamente a la tumba es un acto de liberación o de sumisión?» (p. 145) and «El hogar es un espacio muy importante en los cinco relatos. ¿Qué simboliza y cómo está representado?» (p. 146). These form a useful starting point for creating a class discussion around the anthology and could also serve as a basis for crafting essay questions for individual as-

essment. The discussion questions, along with the critical analyses within the text, provide a solid example of how to read and analyze a literary text, and would thus be well-suited to helping students develop analytical and writing skills.

As they frame the concept of a feminist perspective on the Fantastic, García and López-Pellisa discuss the gender binary and rightly question the default binarism that some scholars fall into. In the paragraph of salient questions, they ask, «Should we assume that gender is polarised in two distinctive categories, thus neglecting *other non-binary identities, such as transgender?*» (p. 17, emphasis mine). The question is well-founded, and I have no argument with it. We must indeed question the reductiveness of two distinctive gender categories. My only note is that «non-binary identities» and «transgender identities» are not the same thing, nor are transgender identities a subcategory of non-binary identities as the phrasing implies. Rather, the term non-binary is one of many terms which «People whose gender is not male or female use ... to describe themselves».¹ Not every trans person is non-binary, and binary trans men and women's identities should not be erased. This issue can easily be remedied by rephrasing the question in a future edition of the work. Notwithstanding the conflation of non-binary and

1 «Understanding Non-Binary People: How to Be Respectful and Supportive» *National Center for Transgender Equality*. 5 Oct 2018. Accessed 3 Nov 2019. <https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive>

trans identities, this section is a good start towards identifying the wide spectrum of gender identities. García and López-Pellisa «keep a cautious distance from ... essentialist and binary conceptions of gender» and endorse moving «away from the assumption that there is a specific female manner of writing the supernatural and a common denominator that unifies female texts of the fantastic, since it is very difficult to prove that a trope is exclusively female» (p. 17). Their approach is in line with both Fantastic and feminist scholarship and is appropriate to their study.

Patricia García is Associate Professor in Hispanic and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Nottingham (School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies). Teresa López-Pellisa is Ayudante Doctor in the Department of Spanish, Modern and Classical Philology of the Uni-

versitat de les Illes Balears. Their text plays an important role in the ongoing scholarly conversation of Fantastic Studies, and it makes the vital observation that women's works have been understudied and indeed undervalued. As García writes in the introduction to the volume, «it is remarkable that women writers frequently feature as secondary characters in existing histories of the fantastic» (p. 7). I hope that their work will lead to further volumes highlighting the remarkable contributions of women writers have made to Fantastic Literature.

KIERSTY LEMON-ROGERS
Department of Hispanic Studies
at the University of Kentucky
Kiersty.lemon@gmail.com

